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Environment and sustainable development

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields

Note verbale dated 22 August 2002 from the Permanent Mission of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and has the honour to inform him that Jordan, current Chairman of the Executive Council of the International Tourism Organization, would appreciate the assistance of the Secretariat in circulating the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism (see annex) during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under items 89 and 94 of the provisional agenda.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 22 August 2002 from the Permanent Misson of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism

In the framework of the UN International Year of Ecotourism, 2002, under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), over one thousand participants coming from 132 countries, from the public, private and non-governmental sectors met at the World Ecotourism Summit, hosted in Québec City, Canada, by Tourisme Québec and the Canadian Tourism Commission, between 19 and 22 May 2002.

The Québec Summit represented the culmination of 18 preparatory meetings held in 2001 and 2002, involving over 3,000 representatives from national and local governments including the tourism, environment and other administrations, private ecotourism businesses and their trade associations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and consultants, intergovernmental organizations, and indigenous and local communities.

This document takes into account the preparatory process, as well as the discussions held during the Summit. It is the result of a multistakeholder dialogue, although it is not a negotiated document. Its main purpose is the setting of a preliminary agenda and a set of recommendations for the development of ecotourism activities in the context of sustainable development.

The participants at the Summit acknowledge the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, August/September 2002, as the ground-setting event for international policy in the next 10 years, and emphasize that, as a leading industry, the sustainability of tourism should be a priority at WSSD due to its potential contribution to poverty alleviation and environmental protection in endangered ecosystems. Participants therefore request the UN, its organizations and member governments represented at this Summit to disseminate the following Declaration and other results from the World Ecotourism Summit at the WSSD.

The participants to the World Ecotourism Summit, aware of the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of the large variety of ecotourism stakeholders, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local and indigenous communities,

Recognize that ecotourism embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, concerning the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. It also embraces the following specific principles which distinguish it from the wider concept of sustainable tourism:

- Contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,
- Includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation, and contributing to their well-being,
- Interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors,
- Lends itself better to independent travellers, as well as to organized tours for small size groups.

Acknowledge that tourism has significant and complex social, economic and environmental implications, which can bring both benefits and costs to the environment and local communities,

Consider the growing interest of people in travelling to natural areas, both on land and sea,

Recognize that ecotourism has provided a leadership role in introducing sustainability practices to the tourism sector,

Emphasize that ecotourism should continue to contribute to make the overall tourism industry more sustainable, by increasing economic and social benefits for host communities, actively contributing to the conservation of natural resources and the cultural integrity of host communities, and by increasing awareness of all travellers towards the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,

Recognize the cultural diversity associated with many natural areas, particularly because of the historical presence of local and indigenous communities, of which some have maintained their traditional knowledge, uses and practices many of which have proven to be sustainable over the centuries,

Reiterate that funding for the conservation and management of biodiverse and culturally rich protected areas has been documented to be inadequate worldwide,

Recognize further that many of these areas are home to peoples often living in poverty, who frequently lack adequate health care, education facilities, communications systems, and other infrastructure required for genuine development opportunity,

Affirm that different forms of tourism, especially ecotourism, if managed in a sustainable manner can represent a valuable economic opportunity for local and indigenous populations and their cultures and for the conservation and sustainable use of nature for future generations and can be a leading source of revenues for protected areas,

Emphasize that at the same time, wherever and whenever tourism in natural and rural areas is not properly planned, developed and managed, it contributes to the deterioration of natural landscapes, threats to wildlife and biodiversity, marine and coastal pollution, poor water quality, poverty, displacement of indigenous and local communities, and the erosion of cultural traditions,

Acknowledge that ecotourism development must consider and respect the land and property rights, and, where recognized, the right to self-determination and cultural sovereignty of indigenous and local communities, including their protected, sensitive and sacred sites as well as their traditional knowledge,

Stress that to achieve equitable social, economic and environmental benefits from ecotourism and other forms of tourism in natural areas, and to minimize or avoid potential negative impacts, participative planning mechanisms are needed that allow local and indigenous communities, in a transparent way, to define and regulate the use of their areas at the local level, including the right to opt out of tourism development,

Understand that small and micro businesses seeking to meet social and environmental objectives are key partners in ecotourism and are often operating in a development climate that does not provide suitable financial and marketing support for ecotourism,

Recognize that to improve the chances of survival of small-, medium-, and micro enterprises further understanding of the ecotourism market will be required through market research, specialized credit instruments for tourism businesses, grants for external costs, incentives for the use of sustainable energy and innovative technical solutions, and an emphasis on developing skills not only in business but within government and those seeking to support business solutions,

Accept the need to avoid discrimination between people, whether by race, gender or other personal circumstances, with respect to their involvement in ecotourism as consumers or suppliers,

Recognize that visitors have a responsibility to the sustainability of the destination and the global environment through their travel choice, behaviour and activities, and that therefore it is important to communicate to them the qualities and sensitivities of destinations,

In light of the above, the participants to the World Ecotourism Summit, having met in Québec City, from 19 to 22 May 2002, produced a series of recommendations, which they propose to governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, community-based associations, academic and research institutions, inter-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, development assistance agencies, and indigenous and local communities, as follows:

A. To national, regional and local governments

1. *formulate* national, regional and local ecotourism policies and development strategies that are consistent with the overall objectives of sustainable development, and to do so through a wide consultation process with those who are likely to become involved in, affect, or be affected by ecotourism activities;

2. *guarantee* -in conjunction with local and indigenous communities, the private sector, NGOs and all ecotourism stakeholders- the protection of nature, local and indigenous cultures and specially traditional knowledge, genetic resources, rights to land and property, as well as rights to water;

3. *ensure* the involvement, appropriate participation and necessary coordination of all the relevant public institutions at the national, provincial and local level, (including the establishment of inter-ministerial working groups as appropriate) at different stages in the ecotourism process, while at the same time opening and facilitating the participation of other stakeholders in ecotourism-related decisions. Furthermore, adequate budgetary mechanisms and appropriate legislative frameworks need to *be set up* to allow implementation of the objectives and goals set up by these multistakeholder bodies;

4. *include* in the above framework the necessary regulatory and monitoring mechanisms at the national, regional and local levels, including objective sustainability indicators jointly agreed with all stakeholders and environmental impact assessment studies to be used as feedback mechanism. Results of monitoring should be made available to the general public;

5. *develop* regulatory mechanisms for internalization of environmental costs in all aspects of the tourism product, including international transport;

6. *develop* the local and municipal capacity to implement growth management tools such as zoning, and participatory land-use planning not only in protected areas but in buffer zones and other ecotourism development zones;

7. *use* internationally approved and reviewed guidelines to develop certification schemes, ecolabels and other voluntary initiatives geared towards sustainability in ecotourism, encouraging private operators to join such schemes and promoting their recognition by consumers. However, certification systems should reflect regional and local criteria. Build capacity and provide financial support to make these schemes accessible to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In addition, monitoring and a regulatory framework are necessary to support effective implementation of these schemes;

8. *ensure* the provision of technical, financial and human resources development support to micro, small and medium-sized firms, which are the core of ecotourism, with a view to enable them to start, grow and develop their businesses in a sustainable manner;

9. *define* appropriate policies, management plans, and interpretation programmes for visitors and earmark adequate sources of funding for natural areas to manage visitor numbers, protect vulnerable ecosystems, and the sustainable use of sensitive habitats. Such plans should include clear norms, direct and indirect management strategies, and regulations with the funds to ensure monitoring of social and environmental impacts for all ecotourism businesses operating in the area, as well as for tourists wishing to visit them;

10. *include* micro, small and medium-sized ecotourism companies, as well as community-based and NGO-based ecotourism operations in the overall promotional strategies and programmes carried out by the National Tourism Administration, both in the international and domestic markets;

11. *encourage* and *support* the creation of regional networks and cooperation for promotion and marketing of ecotourism products at the international and national levels;

12. *provide* incentives to tourism operators and other service providers (such as marketing and promotion advantages) for them to adopt ecotourism principles and make their operations more environmentally, socially and culturally responsible;

13. *ensure* that basic environmental and health standards are identified and met by all ecotourism development even in the most rural areas. This should include aspects such as site selection, planning, design, the treatment of solid waste, sewage, and the protection of watersheds, etc., and *ensure* also that ecotourism development strategies are not undertaken by governments without investment in sustainable infrastructure and the reinforcement of local/municipal capabilities to regulate and monitor such aspects;

14. *institute* baseline environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies and surveys that record the social environmental state of destinations, with special attention to endangered species, and *invest,* or *support* institutions that invest in research programmes on ecotourism and sustainable tourism;

15. *support* the further implementation of the international principles, guidelines and codes of ethics for sustainable tourism (e.g. such as those proposed by UNEP, WTO, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the International Labor Organization) for the enhancement of international and national legal frameworks, policies and master plans to implement the concept of sustainable development into tourism;

16. *consider* as one option the reallocation of tenure and management of public lands, from extractive or intensive productive sectors to tourism combined with conservation, wherever this is likely to improve the net social, economic and environmental benefit for the community concerned;

17. *promote* and *develop* educational programmes addressed to children and young people to enhance awareness about nature conservation and sustainable use, local and indigenous cultures and their relationship with ecotourism;

18. *promote* collaboration between outbound tour operators and incoming operators and other service providers and NGOs at the destination to further educate tourists and influence their behaviour at destinations, especially those in developing countries;

19. *incorporate* sustainable transportation principles in the planning and design of access and transportation systems, and encourage tour operators and the travelling public to make soft mobility choices.

B. To the private sector

20. *bear* in mind that for ecotourism businesses to be sustainable, they need to be profitable for all stakeholders involved, including the projects' owners, investors, managers and employees, as well as the communities and the conservation organizations of natural areas where it takes place;

21. *conceive, develop and conduct* their businesses minimizing negative effects on, and positively contributing to, the conservation of sensitive ecosystems and the environment in general, and directly benefiting and including local and indigenous communities;

22. ***ensure*** **that the design, planning, development and operation of ecotourism facilities incorporates sustainability principles, such as sensitive site design and community sense of place, as well as conservation of water, energy and materials, and accessibility to all categories of population without discrimination;**

23. *adopt* as appropriate a reliable certification or other systems of voluntary regulation, such as ecolabels, in order to demonstrate to their potential clients their adherence to sustainability principles and the soundness of the products and services they offer;

24. *cooperate* with governmental and non-governmental organizations in charge of protected natural areas and conservation of biodiversity, ensuring that ecotourism operations are practised according to the management plans and other regulations prevailing in those areas, so as to minimize any negative impacts upon them while enhancing the quality of the tourism experience and contribute financially to the conservation of natural resources;

25. *make* increasing use of local materials and products, as well as local logistical and human resource inputs in their operations, in order to maintain the overall authenticity of the ecotourism product and increase the proportion of financial and other benefits that remain at the destination. To achieve this, private operators should invest in the training of the local workforce;

26. *ensure* that the supply chain used in building up an ecotourism operation is thoroughly sustainable and consistent with the level of sustainability aimed at in the final product or service to be offered to the customer;

27. *work* actively with indigenous leadership and local communities to ensure that indigenous cultures and communities are depicted accurately and with respect, and that their staff and guests are well and accurately informed regarding local and indigenous sites, customs and history;

28. *promote* among their clients an ethical and environmentally conscious behaviour vis-à-vis the ecotourism destinations visited, such as by environmental education or by encouraging voluntary contributions to support local community or conservation initiatives;

29. *generate* awareness among all management and staff of local, national and global environmental and cultural issues through ongoing environmental education, and support the contribution that they and their families can make to conservation, community economic development and poverty alleviation;

30. *diversify* their offer by developing a wide range of tourist activities at a given destination and by extending their operations to different destinations in order to spread the potential benefits of ecotourism and to avoid overcrowding some selected ecotourism sites, thus threatening their long-term sustainability. In this regard, private operators are urged to respect, and contribute to, established visitor impact management systems of ecotourism destinations;

31. *create* and *develop* funding mechanisms for the operation of business associations or cooperatives that can assist with ecotourism training, marketing, product development, research and financing;

32. *ensure* an equitable distribution of financial benefits from ecotourism revenues between international, outbound and incoming tour operators, local service providers and local communities through appropriate instruments and strategic alliances;

33. *formulate* and *implement* company policies for sustainability with a view to applying them in each part of their operations.

C. To non-governmental organizations, community-based associations, academic and research institutions.

34. *provide* technical, financial, educational, capacity building and other support to ecotourism destinations, host community organizations, small businesses and the corresponding local authorities in order to ensure that appropriate policies, development and management guidelines, and monitoring mechanisms are being applied towards sustainability;

35. *monitor* and *conduct* research on the actual impacts of ecotourism activities upon ecosystems, biodiversity, local and indigenous cultures and the socio-economic fabric of the ecotourism destinations;

36. *cooperate* with public and private organizations ensuring that the data and information generated through research is channeled to support decision-making processes in ecotourism development and management;

37. *cooperate* with research institutions to develop the most adequate and practical solutions to ecotourism development issues.

D. To inter-governmental organizations, international financial institutions and development assistance agencies

38. *develop* and *assist* in the implementation of national and local policy and planning guidelines and evaluation frameworks for ecotourism and its relationships with biodiversity conservation, socio-economic development, respect of human rights, poverty alleviation, nature conservation and other objectives of sustainable development, and to intensify the transfer of such know-how to all countries. Special attention should be paid to countries in a developing stage or least developed status, to small island developing States and to countries with mountain areas, considering that 2002 is also designated as the International Year of Mountains by the UN;

39. *build capacity* for regional, national and local organizations for the formulation and application of ecotourism policies and plans, based on international guidelines;

40. ***develop or adopt, as appropriate,*** international standards and financial mechanisms for ecotourism certification systems that take into account the needs of small and medium enterprises and facilitates their access to those procedures, and ***support*** their implementation;

41. *incorporate* multistakeholder dialogue processes into policies, guidelines and projects at the global, regional and national levels for the exchange of experiences between countries and sectors involved in ecotourism;

42. ***strengthen*** efforts in identifying the factors that determine the success or failure of ecotourism ventures throughout the world, in order to transfer such experiences and best practices to other nations, by means of publications, field missions, training seminars and technical assistance projects; UNEP, WTO and other international organizations should continue and expand the international dialogue after the Summit on sustainable tourism and ecotourism issues, for example by conducting periodical reviews of ecotourism development through international and regional forums;

43. *adapt* as necessary their financial facilities and lending conditions and procedures to suit the needs of micro-, small- and medium-sized ecotourism firms that are the core of this industry, as a condition to ensure its long term economic sustainability;

44. *develop* the internal human resource capacity to support sustainable tourism and ecotourism as a development sub-sector in itself and to ensure that internal expertise, research, and documentation are in place to oversee the use of ecotourism as a sustainable development tool;

45. *develop* financial mechanisms for training and capacity building, that takes into account the time and resources required to successfully enable local communities and indigenous peoples to participate equitably in ecotourism development.

E. To local and indigenous communities

In addition to all the references to local and indigenous communities made in the preceding paragraphs of this Declaration, (in particular para. 5, 8, 9 and 10 on page 2; para. 1 on page 3; in A 2 and 17; B 21 and 27; C 3., D 45) participants addressed the following recommendations to the local and indigenous communities themselves:

46. As part of a community vision for development, that may include ecotourism, *define* and *implement* a strategy for improving collective benefits for the community through ecotourism development including human, physical, financial, and social capital development, and improved access to technical information;

47. *strengthen, nurture* and *encourage* the community's ability to maintain and use traditional skills, particularly home-based arts and crafts, agricultural produce, traditional housing and landscaping that use local natural resources in a sustainable manner.

F. To the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

48. *recognize* the need to apply the principles of sustainable development to tourism, and the exemplary role of ecotourism in generating economic, social and environmental benefits;

49. *integrate* the role of tourism, including ecotourism, in the outcomes expected at WSSD.

Québec City, Canada, 22 May 2002